

# The Journal News

WESTCHESTER • ROCKLAND • PUTNAM

## Monsey synagogue to celebrate 50 years

By KARI NEERING

THE JOURNAL NEWS

(Original publication: December 12, 2003)

During its first year, about a dozen tight knit families gathered in a farmhouse off a stone road in Monsey to practice their Jewish faith at Community Synagogue of Monsey.

Fifty years later, leaders of the modernized shul on West Maple Avenue hope to shed light on its history through events planned in recognition of its milestone anniversary.

"The community grew up around it," said Carol Eisenman of Monsey, whose husband, Irving, was one of several men who purchased the farmhouse and opened the synagogue in 1954. "It was a drawing card for people who wanted that kind of service, attracting many people up here who are modern Orthodox. We're all very similar people. We're a group of people that blend together."

The synagogue's Yovel Committee has planned a number of 50th anniversary events. The commemoration began last month with a breakfast and lecturer from Israel, followed by dinner last weekend at the synagogue. Coming events include a scholar-in-residence weekend, a series of cocktail parties, outdoor activities to include the children and grandchildren of current members and a weekend trip upstate, where the founding members will be honored.

Dr. Martin Gewirtz, president of Community Synagogue of Monsey, said he was looking forward to revitalizing the shul and maintaining its status in the community.

"I'm trying to bring the shul into the next 50 years," he said.

The first services at the synagogue were held July 3, 1954.

Irving Eisenman recalled that when he helped start it, the synagogue was made up of a close group of people. Now, with about 200 families belonging, he said the biggest difference from the beginning was that it didn't have the same intimate feeling.

**"As always, when things get a little bit bigger, you lose the personal touch," he said. "However, it's still functioning rather well. I don't believe that it's been 50 years. I can't believe I'm 80 years old now."**

**The congregation temporarily moved to the Eisenmans' home a year after the synagogue opened when a fire destroyed part of the building. The synagogue was made larger during repairs, and again in 1965 when a building was attached to the existing structure to make room for the growing membership.**

**It was during that time when Rabbi Dovid Moses Tendler joined the synagogue. The well-known rabbinical authority and international panelist on Orthodox Jewry was out of town yesterday and couldn't be reached for comment. Jack Prince, past president of the synagogue and chairman of the anniversary committee, said the synagogue served many influential people in Rockland, including Tendler, whom he described as a "world-renowned figure."**

**"It's a great occasion, not only for our immediate community at the synagogue but for the entire county," Prince said of the anniversary. "It's been a great place, and a great community to raise our families. We hope it will continue for many years to come."**

**Prince said that he hoped the planned events would stimulate people's minds and make them aware of contributions made at the synagogue during the last 50 years.**

**Founding member Henry Zeisel said the shul had successfully served young children without overlooking the rest of its membership. He said he was proud that he had helped organize a place that has served the Orthodox community well.**

**"I think we did a good job," he said. "The effects will last. The results will be gratifying."**

***Send e-mail to: [kneering@thejournalnews.com](mailto:kneering@thejournalnews.com)***